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RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA 3034

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 MADRID 001774

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DEPARTMENT FOR S/CT (AMBASSADOR DAILEY)
NSC FOR ELIZABETH FARR
NCTC FOR MICHAEL LEITER
FBI FOR ART CUMMINGS
JUSTICE FOR JESSIE LIU
HOMELAND SECURITY FOR MARISA LINO

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: SPAIN/CT OVERVIEW: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF
S/CT COORDINATOR DAILEY

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Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Mr. Ambassador, the visit to Madrid of your interagency delegation comes during a time when the Spanish government is already in a heightened state of terrorist alert, both from the Basque terrorist group ETA and from Islamist extremists threatening to strike at the heart of the former Muslim-controlled region they still call "al-Andalus." Spanish government officials have made clear their desire to coordinate closely with the USG on counterterrorism, which they broadly view as a shared threat. They will certainly be interested in your assessment of Al-Qa'ida's expanding global outreach, especially in Europe and North Africa. Although the Socialist government of President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero is not in lockstep with the US on many issues, Zapatero supports a strong CT policy, and cooperation with the US contributes to this objective. However, bureaucratic obstacles (highlighted by intense inter-service rivalries that preclude almost all information sharing or joint CT operations and investigations) remain an impediment to improved cooperation. You will have the opportunity to meet with a group of Spain's interagency CT team (including representatives from the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, National Intelligence Center, NCTC-equivalent, National Police, and Civil Guard), and you should emphasize our recent success in establishing an interagency task force to address the heightened threat environment. Spain is a valued US partner and an important geostrategic player that has achieved a remarkable transformation since the end of the Franco dictatorship 30 years ago. It is one of the leading democracies in Europe, and has the eighth-largest economy in the world. I hope you and your delegation enjoy a productive interaction with Spanish counterparts during your stay. END SUMMARY.

//CT OVERVIEW//

¶2. (S/NF) Spain is a past and current Al-Qa'ida target and a critical player in US-EU counterterrorism efforts, due to its close proximity to the Maghreb and a population that includes more than one million Muslims. Although Spain has been fighting domestic terrorism since the 1960s, especially from the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorist organization and the radical left-wing First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Group (GRAPO), it was only after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States and the March 11, 2004 Madrid train bombings that the Spanish government considered the threat from Islamic terrorism to be one of its top national security priorities. At the time of the Madrid bombings, however, Spain was already an active front in the Global War on Terror as a result of its arrest of significant Al-Qa'ida figures beginning in 2001 and its identification of numerous Islamic extremist groups operating within its borders. Spain continues to be an important staging point for North African extremists heading to Iraq to join the insurgency. The Spanish government fears that hardened and experienced Jihadists will soon make their way back to Spain in a reverse terrorist pipeline. Spanish media reported in July that the Iraqi terrorist group Ansar al-Islam had established a recruiting cell in Catalonia to route would-be suicide bombers from Spain to Iraq. Spain has aggressively targeted recruiters and facilitators and has arrested some 35 suspected Al-Qa'ida operatives as of July 2007, according to the Ministry of Interior. Spanish authorities arrested over 50 suspected Islamist extremists in 2006 and are currently holding some 100 detainees on Islamist terrorism-related charges.

¶3. (S/NF) While the GOS differs with the US on the use of military force to combat terrorism, bilateral CT cooperation remains one of the cornerstones of this relationship. Spain has pursued an aggressive agenda in law enforcement, judicial, and information-sharing efforts. In March 2005, US

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Attorney General Gonzales and the Spanish Minister of Justice agreed to the creation of a bilateral CT working group. Spanish participants are from the Spanish AG's office and from the office of the Prosecutor of the National Court. Embassy's Legatt, Consular, and Political sections join with senior officials from the FBI and DOJ to participate on the US side. The bilateral CT working group has met several times, both in Madrid and Washington, with the last gathering in early 2007. The group's goal is to build mutual trust and enhance cooperation on combating Islamic extremism. The US Terrorist Screening Center and Spain's NCTC equivalent are due this month to sign an information-sharing protocol covering terrorist lookout information as envisioned in Homeland Security Presidential Directive Six (HSPD-6).

¶4. (S/NF) Spain participates in the Megaports and Container Security Initiatives, and works with us to deny terrorists access to Spanish financial institutions. Spain maintains a robust law enforcement and intelligence posture against Islamic terrorist finance and works well with us to combat this problem. Spanish police in July arrested two Syrian nationals on money laundering and terrorism finance charges. Spain and the US co-chair the OECD's Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. Spain is a member of the G8's Counterterrorism Action Group and provides technical assistance to other countries to help build their institutions to counter terrorist finance. Spain and France are collaborating on a project to establish a Financial Intelligence Unit in Morocco. With respect to terrorist designations, Spain implements all UN designations. We are confident that Spain follows up on our requests for asset checks of suspect individuals and organizations. However, it is clear the Spanish suffer a sense of fatigue with the designation regime, in part because there have been a number of well-publicized cases of mistaken identities. This may explain why Spain has still not designated convicted Al-Qa'ida financier Barakat Yarkas and his collaborator Driss Chebli.

15. (S/NF) Spain remains both a target of international terrorist groups and an important transit point and logistical base for terrorist organizations operating in Western Europe. Spain does not serve as a sanctuary for terrorists or terrorist organizations. However, the large population of recent immigrants from North Africa and South Asia (e.g. there are upwards of 60,000 Pakistani immigrants living in the Barcelona area alone, most of whom are single or here without their families), the opportunities that exist for raising funds through illicit activities, and the ease of travel to other countries in Europe, make Spain a strategic location for international terrorist groups. The GOS knows it faces a challenge in how to integrate its large Muslim community into Spanish society. Since 2004, the government has tried to promote moderate Islam and regularize contact with Muslim communities to minimize their alienation, but officials tell us they do not yet know if these policy initiatives have had any effect. One problem we see is that Spain's Muslim community is far from homogenous and it is not clear that the individuals with whom the GOS is engaging truly speak for or have influence among large sections of the Muslim immigrant community. Our counterparts also tell us they face daunting challenges in stemming the tide of radicalization and recruitment occurring in Spanish prisons, as these locations have become hotbeds of budding Jihadist activity. One senior Spanish CT official related his personal experience during an official trip to Morocco where he was shown pictures of several inmates who had spent 2-3 years in local jails on various "minor" charges. He said that the inmates, upon their release, left with long beards reminiscent of the Taliban and head coverings and clothes indicative of radical Islamic fundamentalists. Spanish authorities tell us that approximately 15 to 20 percent of Muslims who were first arrested for petty crimes were later arrested for Islamic extremist activities.

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//CHALLENGES REMAIN//

16. (S/NF) Despite the generally positive bilateral CT relationship, challenges remain. Spain's main intelligence and law enforcement services (the National Intelligence Center, National Police, and Civil Guard) often fail to communicate with each other and sometimes do not talk with us. Spain's services rarely share information on CT targets or participate in joint CT operations, largely because of deep, long-standing rivalries. This obviously serves to reduce the overall effectiveness of the Spanish security apparatus and can hinder our bilateral CT cooperation at the working level. One senior security official quipped to us that US intelligence often had a better idea of what was going on in Spain than Spanish services did because the US could go separately to the Civil Guard, National Police, and National Intelligence Center and then combine the information received to gain the full picture. Senior Spanish officials are aware of their stovepipe problem, but it is not evident that the situation has improved since the creation of Spain's National Anti-terrorism Coordination Center (CNCA - our NCTC equivalent) in the wake of the Madrid train bombings. Your delegation will be able to lead by example and show a united front between elements of the US diplomatic, security, law enforcement, and intelligence apparatus.

//CREATING A CT/LAW ENFORCEMENT HUB IN BARCELONA//

17. (S/NF) Mission Spain is currently developing a proposal to transform our Consulate General in Barcelona into a platform for a multi-agency, jointly-coordinated counterterrorism, anti-crime, and intelligence center to work with our Spanish hosts in combating the target rich environment of terrorist and criminal activities centered in the Western Mediterranean region. This hub concept would

count on the contributions of key USG agencies such as DEA, DHS, FBI, ORA, State, and USSS. Although this concept is still in its infancy and not ready to be shared with the Spanish, our Mission team would like to discuss this idea with you and your delegation. This is a field-driven strategy to counter, disrupt, and eliminate terrorist and organized crime networks that cross national borders by breaking down regional stovepipes within USG departments and agencies. The center would also build host nation cooperation and capacity to address transnational threats to US national security.

//SUBSTANTIVE SCHEDULE//

18. (S/NF) Mission Spain's Country Team strategy has been to develop a two-nation, multi-agency approach to confront the terrorist threat in all its aspects. Your first meeting will be with the Embassy's Counterterrorism Working Group (CTWG), chaired by the DCM, where you will hear from each of the relevant agency and section heads on their role in fostering the bilateral CT relationship. You will be able to review with the CTWG the day's schedule with Spanish counterparts and what we hope to accomplish in each meeting. Your first meeting with Spanish officials will be with key members of Spain's upper house of parliament so that you can deliver your message directly to Spanish politicians of all political stripes. These are the individuals who can convince the Spanish public of the necessity to continue to take the fight to Al-Qa'ida.

19. (S/NF) Even though Spanish politicians often criticize our CT policies, the Spanish population appears to understand the threat. The latest Transatlantic Trends survey by the Marshall Fund found that 71 percent of Spaniards were worried about the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, more than the European average of 54 percent and the US average of 59 percent. Over 80 percent of Spaniards surveyed expressed

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concern about international terrorism, compared with the European average of 66 percent and the US average of 74 percent.

10. (S/NF) Following the meeting with Congress, you will pay an office call on Deputy Interior Minister Antonio Camacho, a good friend of the Embassy who understands the need for strong bilateral CT cooperation, and later join your delegation as it delivers its briefing to Spain's interagency CT team composed of representatives from the Ministry of Interior, National Intelligence Center, NCTC-equivalent, National Police, and Civil Guard. This substantive meeting will provide the opportunity for a roundtable discussion on CT best practices and an analysis of areas in which to broaden and deepen CT cooperation. You should also press the Spanish for their views on terrorist groups from North Africa operating inside Spain, specifically Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb. We will then meet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with their senior officers working terrorism, nonproliferation, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The final event of the program is a working lunch hosted by the DCM with a small group of Spain's top counterterrorism officials.

//THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT//

11. (C) President Zapatero will face Spanish voters again in March 2008. While anything can change between now and next March, most local pundits are predicting his re-election, due mainly to the inability of opposition Partido Popular (PP) leader Mariano Rajoy to galvanize and energize the Spanish population beyond his center-right base. Key factors which could influence the electoral outcome are the potential for a slowing economy as well as the impact of another massive terrorist attack on Spanish soil, and Zapatero is well aware that he came to power precisely because of a terrorist attack

during elections held on March 14, 2004. Before the train bombings on March 11, 2004, the PP held a four-percentage point lead in the polls. Just three days later, the frightened and angry Spanish electorate gave Zapatero's Socialist party a four-percentage point victory. The PP in many ways has yet to get over this sudden twist of fate. Although the Spanish military strongly supports the United States, Spanish foreign policy is primarily pacifist. For this reason, the Spanish government and population are often critical of the military aspects of US CT policy. The Zapatero government feels much more comfortable committing troops to peacekeeping operations than to combat, although senior GOS officials insist that they are committed to a long-term military presence in Afghanistan.

//THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP//

112. (C) Spain cooperates closely with the US in key areas besides CT, including counter-narcotics, military and defense programs, non-proliferation and Latin America. Spain is an important NATO ally, a key player in the European Union, and currently holds the rotating presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Though it removed its troops from Iraq in 2004 shortly after President Zapatero's unexpected election, Spain has contributed \$22 million to the construction of the children's hospital in Basrah, Iraq. Spain continues to fulfill a \$300 million pledge for reconstruction in Iraq and recently pledged an additional \$28 million to the effort. Spain has made a strong, long-term commitment to NATO's mission in Afghanistan, where it has 690 soldiers deployed to the Badghis Provincial Reconstruction Team and Forward Support Base; it has also contributed 150 million euros to Afghan reconstruction. Spain has deployed 1100 soldiers to Lebanon, where they lead a multi-national brigade of UN peacekeeping forces (UNIFIL) assigned to the volatile tri-border region between Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. In June, a terrorist attack killed six members of the Spanish UNIFIL contingent. Spain further supports US

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strategic interests by allowing the US to share two important Spanish bases, ROTA Naval Station and Moron Air Force Base in Southern Spain, as well as providing blanket flight and overflight clearances. The 1500 US military personnel at the two bases support thousands of US military flights and hundreds of US ship visits each year, and is a major hub for US force and logistical deployments into the Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Continued access to and use of these bases is essential to US military and strategic interests.
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